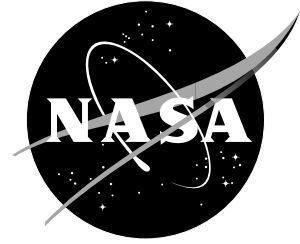


NewsRelease

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NASA Langley Story Opportunities - April 2001

April 18 briefing will announce first X-43 flight. The NASA Langley-led Hyper-X program will announce Wednesday that the first of three unpiloted hypersonic X-43 vehicles will soon be flown from NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Calif. Flying from seven to ten times the speed of sound, using air-breathing scramjet engines instead of traditional rocket power, the experimental 12-foot-long X-43 could represent a major leap forward in the goal of providing faster, more reliable and less expensive access to space. On Wednesday, April 18, at 1 p.m. EDT, NASA will conduct a media briefing from Dryden over NASA Television, featuring key program and project officials to outline plans for upcoming X-43 flights and the Hyper-X program. Reporters may ask questions of the briefers from the NASA Langley newsroom via video link and interview NASA Langley researchers in person.

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21st Century aircraft may be bird-like. At last week's NASA budget briefing for news media, Administrator Dan Goldin showed a videotape of a future aircraft concept that looked more like a bird than an airplane. He explained that wings with embedded "smart" materials and actuators would function like a bird's nervous system and muscles. Just as a bird instinctively uses different feathers on its wings to control its flight, the actuators will change the shape of the aircraft's wing to continually optimize flying conditions. This is one of several technologies being explored by researchers at NASA Langley for proposed 21st Century aerospace vehicles -- radical ideas that promise greatly improved safety, performance, fuel efficiency and reduced airframe noise.

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Open House News

April 28 Open House is infrequent opportunity. Ever wondered how rocket scientists make discoveries or how planes can withstand accidents? Find out when the NASA Langley Research Center opens its gates to the public, April 28, for the first time in four years. Langley has played a pivotal role in air and space travel, almost since the beginning of powered flight. "Technology Leadership for the New Millennium" will showcase Langley's latest breakthroughs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., April 28.

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- more -

Meet famed aviatrix at Open House. Ms. Elinor Smith, one of this country's few surviving female aviation pioneers, plans to be available to meet the public and sign autographs from 10 am - 11 am in the NASA Langley Hangar the day of Open House. In 1928, at age 16, Ms. Smith earned national recognition as the youngest pilot to receive an official pilot's license. It was signed by Orville Wright. Two years later, she was voted 'best female pilot' by her peers - a group that included the famous Amelia Earhart. Her aviation experiences in the 1920s and 30s led to many records and worldwide fame. At age 89, Ms. Smith remains an active pilot. She is visiting NASA Langley to take part in videotaping a documentary on the future of aviation. News media may interview Ms. Smith in advance, April 27 between 1:15-1:45.

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An astronaut, too! Mission Specialist candidate Garrett Reisman will also visit the NASA Langley Research Center for its Open House on April 28. In addition to being an astronaut, Reisman is an FAA Certified Flight Instructor whose other interests include skiing, snowboarding, rock climbing and SCUBA diving. Prior to being chosen by NASA to become an astronaut, Reisman designed the thruster-based attitude control system for NASA's Earth Observing System (EOS) PM-1 spacecraft. He reported to NASA for astronaut training August 1998 and has experienced a variety of instruction covering the space shuttle and International Space Station systems and water and wilderness survival techniques. He is currently performing technical duties in the NASA Johnson Space Center Astronaut Office Robotics Branch while awaiting his first flight assignment.

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Looking ahead:

May speaker: Challenges, Opportunities in Aeronautical Design, Engineering and Manufacturing. "Better, faster, cheaper" emerged in the 1990s as a new paradigm for aerospace. According to aerospace engineer Dr. Earll M. Murman, industrial innovation indicates that aeronautical products have evolved to a "dominant design" and entered the "specific phase" of their product life cycle. Murman believes there are underlying reasons for better, faster, cheaper that can be seen as the framework for future thinking and action of aeronautical professionals in this new era. Murman, Ford Professor of Engineering and Co-Director of the Lean Aerospace Initiative at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), will speak at a colloquium at 2 p.m., Tuesday, May 1, at NASA Langley's H.J.E. Reid Conference Center. Members of the media will have an opportunity to interview Murman at a 1:15 p.m. media briefing. This talk will be repeated in the evening at the Virginia Air & Space Center.

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